



Packers and Packagers, Hand

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Job Overview

The modern industrial assembly line is a marvel to view. Products move by at a dizzying rate. If it were not for Hand Packers and Packagers, these products would all wind up in a pile at the end of the line. Some tasks simply cannot be automated, so many production lines still rely on people to visually inspect and manually pack, package, or wrap their output. Packers manually handle stock and other materials, clean machinery and other equipment, and feed material into or remove it from machines during the packaging phase. They ensure items are inspected for defects, label cartons, stamp information on products, keep records of packaged items, and stack packages on loading docks for shipment. Many products arrive at a store in cartons filled by hand at the end of the production line.

Another kind of assembly line can be found in every grocery store. Here Hand Packers and Packagers ask the all important question, “would you prefer paper or plastic?” and place purchased items into bags. They must make sure the watermelon is under the bread, that cleaning products are bagged separately from produce, and that bags are not overloaded for the customer to carry.

The work is repetitive and workers must be able to keep up with the production line without distraction. For those who are hard working and reliable, becoming a Hand Packer or Packager can be an excellent way to enter logistics.

Packers work in many industries, and job titles reflect that diversity: Food Packer, Candy Packer, Book Packer, Gift Basket Packer, Furniture Packer, Order Packer, Cigar Packer, Shingle Packer, and Toy Packer.

Typical Tasks

- Load materials and products into package processing equipment.
- Obtain, move, and sort products, materials, containers, and orders, using hand tools.
- Assemble, line, and pad cartons, crates, and containers, using hand tools.
- Place or pour products or materials into containers, using hand tools and equipment, or fill containers from spouts or chutes.

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- ➔ Mark and label containers, container tags, or products, using marking tools.
- ➔ Measure, weigh, and count products and materials.
- ➔ Examine and inspect containers, materials, and products in order to ensure that packing specifications are met.
- ➔ Remove completed or defective products or materials, placing them on moving equipment such as conveyors or in specified areas such as loading docks.
- ➔ Seal containers or materials, using glues, fasteners, nails, and hand tools.
- ➔ Record product, packaging, and order information on specified forms and records.
- ➔ Clean containers, materials, supplies, or work areas, using cleaning solutions and hand tools.

*Detailed descriptions of this occupation may be found in the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) at online.onetcenter.org.*

Important Skills, Knowledge, and Abilities

- ➔ Active Listening — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- ➔ Coordination — Adjusting actions in relation to others' actions.
- ➔ Speaking — Talking to others to convey information effectively.
- ➔ Production and Processing — Knowledge of raw materials, production processes, quality control, costs, and other techniques for maximizing the effective manufacture and distribution of goods.
- ➔ Manual Dexterity — The ability to quickly move your hand, your hand together with your arm, or your two hands to grasp, manipulate, or assemble objects.
- ➔ Multilimb Coordination — The ability to coordinate two or more limbs (for example, two arms, two legs, or one leg and one arm) while sitting, standing, or lying down. It does not involve performing the activities while the whole body is in motion.
- ➔ Trunk Strength — The ability to use your abdominal and lower back muscles to support part of the body repeatedly or continuously over time without 'giving out' or fatiguing.
- ➔ Near Vision — The ability to see details at close range (within a few feet of the observer).

Work Environment

Most Hand Packers and Packagers work in air-conditioned buildings. They stand most of the time and constantly use their hands in the packaging process. Workers lift and carry heavy objects, stoop, kneel, crouch, or crawl in awkward positions. Some jobs expose workers to fumes, odors, loud noises, toxic materials and chemicals, or dangerous machinery. These jobs have become much less dangerous as safety equipment is used, proper operating procedures are observed, and safety practices are followed.

Workers may experience stress from time pressure of shipping deadlines or keeping up with products coming off the production line. Shift work is common for Hand Packers and Packagers. Union membership in the United Food and Commercial Workers Union and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters Union may be available to some workers .

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California's Job Outlook and Wages

The California Outlook and Wage table below represents the occupation across all industries.

Standard Occupational Classification	Estimated Number of Workers 2004	Estimated Number of Workers 2014	Average Annual Openings	2006 Wage Range (per hour)
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53-7064	121,900	138,900	3,980	\$7.68 to \$9.29

Wages do not reflect self-employment.

Average annual openings include new jobs plus net replacements.

Source: www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov, Employment Projections by Occupation and OES Employment & Wages by Occupation, Labor Market Information Division, Employment Development Department.

Trends

Employment for Hand Packers and Packagers is expected to grow slower than average when compared with all other occupations. Additionally, the need to replace workers who leave for other kinds of jobs or retire is expected to create 22,800 job openings between 2004 and 2014.

The largest increase in employment of Hand Packers and Packagers is expected in the Temporary Help Services industry. Decreases in employment will occur in those industries that move production off shore. Furthermore, as equipment becomes more advanced, workers will need to be increasingly comfortable with technology.

Training/Requirements/Apprenticeships

There are few education requirements for Hand Packers and Packagers other than the ability to read and understand English at a level adequate to do the job. Some employers may prefer workers with a high school diploma or GED certificate, but most simply require workers to be at least 18 years old and physically capable to perform the work. Some employers also require workers to pass a criminal background check and drug test before employment. Training is often a short demonstration from an experienced worker or supervisor. Core traits needed by Hand Packers and Packagers include careful attention to detail, dependability, and a cooperative attitude.

Recommended High School Course Work

High school students interested in this kind of work should take mathematics and computer technology classes.

Where Do I Find the Job?

Grocery stores employ more Hand Packers and Packagers than any other industry under the job title 'courtesy clerks.' Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Use the *Search for Employers by Industry* feature on the *Career Center* page at www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov to locate employers in your area. Search using keywords from the following industry names to get a list of private firms and their addresses:

- ➡ All Other Plastics Product Manufacturing
- ➡ Commercial Bakeries
- ➡ Convenience Stores
- ➡ Plastics Plumbing Fixture Manufacturing
- ➡ Professional Employer Organizations
- ➡ Retail Bakeries

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- ➔ Employment Placement Agencies
- ➔ Nonpackaging Plastics Film and Sheet
- ➔ Plastics Bottle Manufacturing
- ➔ Supermarkets and Other Grocery Stores
- ➔ Temporary Help Services
- ➔ Urethane and Other Foam Product Mfg

Search these **yellow page** headings for listings of private firms:

- ➔ Employment Agencies
- ➔ Gourmet Food Shops and Specialties
- ➔ Grocers and Markets-Retail
- ➔ Grocers and Markets-Wholesale
- ➔ Grocery Shopping and Delivery Services
- ➔ Packaging Service
- ➔ Packing and Crating Service
- ➔ Super Stores and Supermarkets

Where Can the Job Lead?

Workers who demonstrate reliability and efficiency will be well-positioned for career growth. Opportunities for advancement depend on the industry and employer. Because Hand Packing and Packager work is available during all shifts and as temporary work, it is an ideal job for those who want their days free to pursue further education or skills training.

Related Occupations

Assemblers (see *Manufacturing Careers*)
Electrolytic Plating and Coating Machine Setters and Set-Up Operators, Metal and Plastic
Embossing Machine Set-Up Operators
Floor Layers, except Carpet, Wood, and Hard Tiles
Graders and Sorters, Agricultural Products
Mold Makers, Hand
Molding and Casting Workers
Packaging and Filling Machine Tenders and Operators (see *Manufacturing Careers*)
Shipping, Receiving, and Traffic Clerks (see *Logistics Profile*)
Stock Clerks (see *Logistics Profile*)

Other Sources

Get Tech Careers
www.gettech.org

National Association of Manufacturers
www.nam.org

United Food and Commercial Workers
www.ufcw.org

International Brotherhood of Teamsters
www.teamsters.org